

# What *Connections* Can Teach Us About Postmortems

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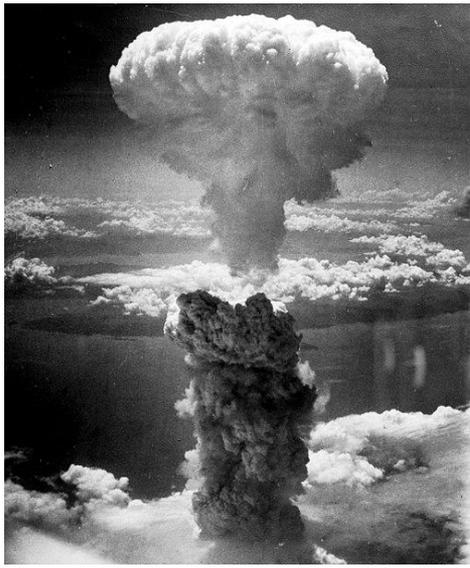
'TRUSS'

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**What is *Connections*?**

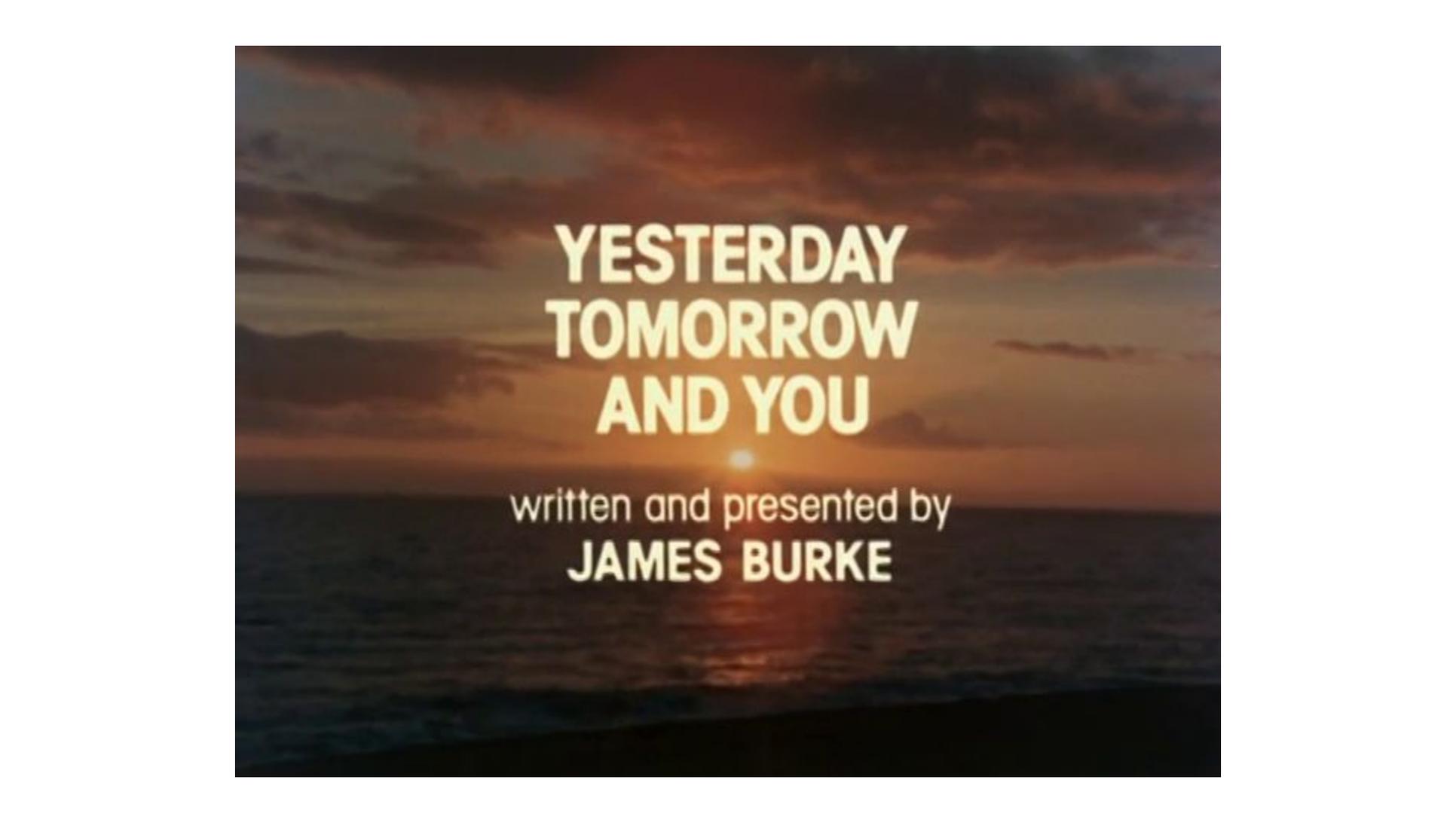






STARBUCKS  
COFFEE

GUANO LEADS DRUGS



**YESTERDAY  
TOMORROW  
AND YOU**

written and presented by  
**JAMES BURKE**



# **My History With History**

# FC.63 THE MEDIEVAL AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION AND ITS IMPACT

Warmer climate □ better conditions for agric.

Feudalism □ more polit. stability (FC.41)

Viking, Arab & Magyar raids let up by 1000 C.F.

**More efficient ways to organize fields:**  
Crop rotation using legumes to replenish nitrogen in the soil □ 3-field system □ Plants 2/3 fields □ 33% more land farmed

Less soil exhaustion & more varied & balanced diet

Less fallow to plow 2X/yr □ More time to develop new farmland

Heavy plow □ Cuts deep rich soils of N. Eur.

Not cross-plowing □ Time to dev. New lands

Furrows □ Some crops after flood or drought

Need more draught animals □ Peasants share plow teams

Cross breeding □ Larger farm horses

Horse collar □ Can pull heavier load from chest

Horseshoe □ Hooves don't crack from wet soil

Plow horse works 50% faster & 1-2 more hrsr/day

More food  
Develop new lands ↔ Population growth

Serfs scatter & divide land in strips □ All get at least some land plowed in time

Horse's speed along w/4-wheeled wagon □ 2X area can supply food to towns

able to support revival of towns, trade & kings (FC.64)

# History

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The study of who, what, where, how, and why events occurred.

“How did Columbus discover America?”

# Historiography



The study of *how* we study and record these events.

“Why do we say Columbus ‘discovered’ America despite the fact that there were millions of people living there?”





**History is storytelling.**



**A postmortem is a story.**

**Telling the story well is important because a completely logical brain does not exist.**



# **The Problem with Postmortems**



**So collect all the data!**

**...and then shove it all into a template...**

**...that everyone skims and *never reads again.***

**Collecting this information is important, but if no one reads it, it is only partially successful.**

A title card for the TV series 'Cosmos'. The word 'COSMOS' is written in a bold, blue, 3D-style font with a slight glow. The background is a dark, starry space scene with a warm, orange and red nebula or star cluster in the center, creating a dramatic and cosmic atmosphere.

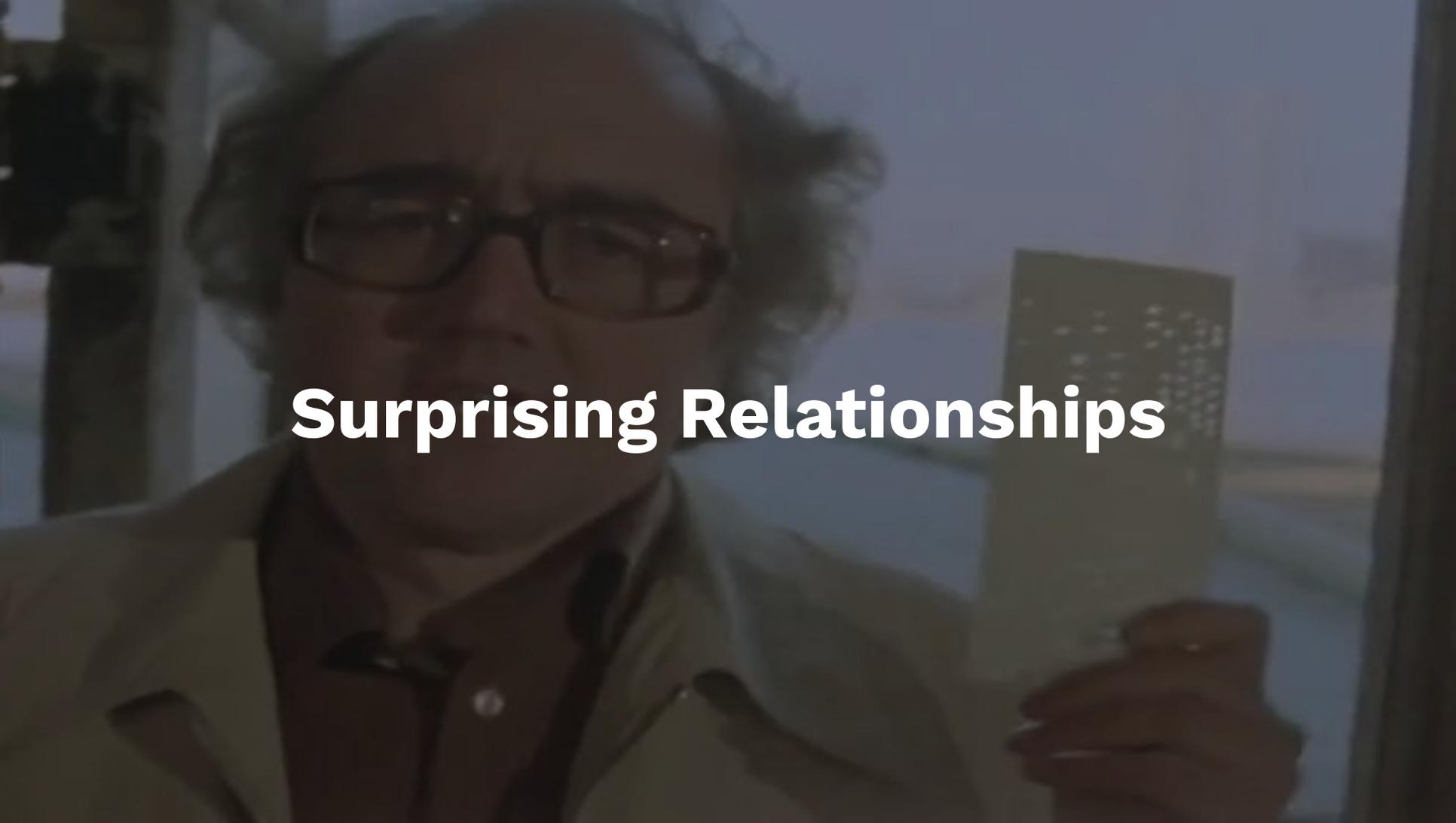
**COSMOS**

A title card for the TV series 'Connections'. The word 'CONNECTIONS' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background is a plain, light-colored surface, possibly a wall or a screen, which makes the text stand out prominently.

**CONNECTIONS**



**What can *Connections* teach us?**

A person with short, curly hair and glasses is shown from the chest up, wearing a light-colored jacket over a dark shirt. They are holding a document or tablet in their right hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and a sky. The text "Surprising Relationships" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white font.

# Surprising Relationships

The background is a dark, out-of-focus scene. On the left, there is a circular, glowing area with a textured, possibly liquid or organic surface. On the right, a dark, curved, elongated object, resembling a piece of wood or a branch, extends into the frame. The overall lighting is dim and atmospheric.

**Zooming In**

A man in a light-colored suit and glasses stands in a village setting, looking down at a small object in his hands, likely a mobile phone. The background shows traditional buildings and palm trees. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The text "Being In the Moment" is overlaid in white, bold font across the center of the image.

**Being In the Moment**



**It's More Complex Than You Think**

A group of people in colorful costumes are performing a dance on a stage. The costumes are vibrant and feature various colors like purple, orange, green, and yellow. The performers are arranged in a circle, and the background is dark, suggesting an indoor setting. The text "A Bit of Song and Dance" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# A Bit of Song and Dance



# **Avoiding the Pitfalls**

**Don't put the cart before the horse.**

**Start with events, not reasons.**

**Real stories don't fit the three-act narrative.**



**TL; DR**

# Make your postmortems more interesting



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- **Highlight surprising connections** between systems and events
- **Zoom in on key systems and people** to show how they did what they did
- Write your postmortems from the perspective of the people **living in the moment**
- Provide enough context to show people that **the incident is more complex than it appears**
- Write your postmortems **so that they are easy to read**



# Sources and Inspiration



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You can view the entirety of the *Connections* series on the Internet Archive here:

<https://archive.org/details/ConnectionsByJamesBurke>



# Sources and Inspiration



- Images from *Cosmos* (1980) and *Connections* (1978) used according to fair use
- [Bombing of Nagasaki](#) image by Charles Levy (Public Domain)
- [Arecibo Observatory](#) image by David Broad (Creative Commons 3.0)
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- [Delta II Rocket](#) image by NASA (Public Domain)
- [New York City Blackout](#) image by Dan Nguyen (Creative Commons 2.0)
- “[PBS’s Connections: The Many Sides of Technology.](#)” Peter J. Schuyten, The New York Times, 21 October 1979

# Sources and Inspiration



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- [The Flow of History](#), Chris Butler (Creative Commons BY-NC 3.0)
- [“The Infinite Hows,”](#) John Allspaw, 2014
- [“Strategic Storytelling,”](#) Jessica Hilt, LISA 2016
- [STELLA Report](#), SNAFUCatchers, 2017
- [“The 7 Deadly Sins of Documentation,”](#) Chastity Blackwell, SRECon EMEA 2018

